MINUTES OF THE MARCH 8, 1996 MEETING OF THE USERS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE


Approval of Minutes

Amendment to the minutes of the previous meeting on December 15, 1995: it was noted that the date for the SLAC 2000 New Ideas Forum has been modified since the minutes were distributed and is now set for April 9, 1996.

Committee Reports

Huber introduced the committee reports by presenting the list of SLUO committees and their members:

- Networking: John Fry, Bruce Schumm, Tracy Usher;
- Office Space: Mike Fero, Jim Johnson;
- Desktop Computing: Frank Porter (SLUO representative);
- SLAC World Wide Web Coordinating: Jenny Huber (SLUO representative).

1. Networking

Fry reported that the networking situation in the U.K. lags behind other European countries. One of the reasons for this is the use of commercial lines rather than a dedicated network. As a test of the network performance, the fraction of packets lost between Rutherford Lab and SLAC was examined over a two-week period (see attached copies). This fraction varied between 0 and 60% with an average near 30%. A comparable exercise was carried out for communication between CERN and SLAC for which much better performance was observed.
The members of the Executive Committee felt the poor networking between the U.K. and the U.S. was a major concern that needs to be addressed immediately. To this effect, it was agreed that Fry would draft a letter to DOE’s Bob Woods on behalf of SLUO to voice the users’ concern about the poor network performance across the Atlantic.

Usher reported the latest news from the local networking front. New network adaptor boxes are expected to be installed in the Central Lab and Central Lab Annex buildings within 3 months. The required hardware will be provided by SCS to existing users.

An extension of the ISDN pilot project at SLAC was approved by David Leith. One of the remaining hurdles is to figure out how to handle out-of-local area users.

2. Desktop Committee

Porter reported that the Desktop Committee (a.k.a. PC/Mac Computing Committee) drafted guidelines for the purchase and usage of PCs. A copy of the draft is available through Porter. This report will serve as input to the Committee headed by C. Boeheim which will set PC standards for SLAC.

3. WWW Committee

Huber reported that the SLAC World Wide Web Coordinating Committee has been meeting monthly since December of last year. Huber, SLUO’s representative on that committee, brought up the issue of access authorization to some of the information provided by the WWW at SLAC. For example, the document “Getting Started on Unix” was found to be inaccessible from browsers running outside of SLAC. People responsible for making information available on the web should be aware of this potential restriction.

PEP-II/BaBar Schedule

Dave Hitlin joined the meeting for discussion of the PEP-II/BaBar schedule. Concern about the schedule has been raised by recent reports indicating that the KEK B-Factory program may be ready for physics earlier than previously planned. Hitlin reminded the Committee that BaBar is scheduled to be rolled in the beamline on July 1, 1999. Belle, the KEK B-Factory experiment, is expected to start data taking before the end of 1998 and has requested an even earlier date for first beams. Hitlin pointed out that the schedule for BaBar already includes a cosmic ray testing period for debugging the detector, but it was not clear whether such tests were included in the schedule for Belle. As a result of the rapid progress of the KEK B-Factory, the PEP-II/BaBar schedule is being reviewed, even though it already is aggressive. PEP-II construction is on schedule and proceeding well but BaBar construction has been somewhat slow to start.
Despite the slow start, it is expected that BaBar will be nearly on schedule by the end of FY 1996. This is partly due to some simplifications in the design (e.g., the endplates and drift chamber cell structure). Given the progress of the KEK B-Factory, the Executive Committee felt that it was crucial for BaBar to remain on schedule and to press the DOE to preserve the full construction budget for FY 1997.

SLC Performance

Bob Siemann joined the meeting to discuss concerns over the recent difficulties in bringing the SLC up. Siemann said the SLC is now considered to be in maintenance mode by the Lab management. He felt that, given SLC’s performance, this was in direct conflict with SLD’s objectives to reach a sizeable data sample with its new vertex detector. Siemann stressed the need for increased communication and interest about the SLC amongst accelerator physicists. The possibility of increased SLD user involvement was also discussed.

SLAC 2000 New Ideas Forum

John Jaros joined the meeting for discussion concerning the SLAC 2000 New Ideas Forum to be taking place on April 9, 1996, in the Auditorium. A special committee has been formed and consists of the following people: Pat Burchat, Mike Fero, John Jaros (Chair), Tom Mattison, Bruce Schimm, Abe Seiden, and Su Dong. Guidelines have been distributed to the user community and the committee members exercised their contacts outside of the Lab. About 10 letters were received by the March 1 deadline. The April 9 meeting will include brief presentations by the Lab Director, and representatives of the PEP-II, NLC, and GLAST programs, which will be followed by about ten talks presenting the various ideas for discussion.

Discussions with Management

David Leith, Burt Richter and Steve Williams joined the meeting for lunchtime discussions.

Nauenberg voiced concern over the BaBar construction schedule and said SIUO will write a letter to DOE’s John O’ Fallon to request full funding for fiscal years 1997 and 1998. Richter encouraged SIUO to go ahead with the letter and to stress the importance of the rapid completion of the detector. He then said that PEP-II is right on schedule and should not be a concern.

Richter was asked to comment on the status of the SLC. He said that the Scientific Policy Committee (SPC) considered the B-Factory program to be the Lab’s first priority followed by the experimental program consisting of the NLC R&D and the SLC. Richter said nothing prevents the SLC from reaching the goals set for the SLC/SLD program. He agreed that SLD could communicate with SLC
leaders to explore the possibility of increased SLD involvement in the machine operation.

Richter requested additional funds from the DOE to extend the current SLC/SLD run into July and possibly further. He then pointed out that this would coincide with the Snowmass workshop. He stressed the importance of a strong SLD presence at the workshop despite the fact that SLD may be running during that time.

The topic then shifted to the SLAC 2000 New Ideas Forum. Richter said the talks should focus on the physics merit rather than on the financial aspects. Some of the new ideas will be submitted to the SPC by the management but Richter said the connection between the New Ideas Forum and the SPC still needs to be articulated. Nauenberg said the next SLUO Social will be held in conjunction with the Forum.

Nauenberg asked whether it would be useful for the Winstein report to receive feedback from the foreign institutes collaborating with SLAC. Richter thought it could be useful.

Nauenberg expressed concern about office security at SLAC, in particular in open areas. It may be necessary to tie down computers, for example. Richter replied that the buildings are being re-keyed one building at a time to address this concern. Williams said he will gather more information regarding the extent of the problem.

David Leith was asked about plans to improve the wide-area networking situation. He said there are ongoing discussions with the DOE and one can expect a major improvement in 1998. However, improvements by a factor of 2 or 4 in bandwidth are expected before 1998. The situation for universities is more complicated due to the fact that the DOE cannot help universities getting connected to ESNET since it is operated by the NSF. Leith is talking to Eisenstein at the NSF to help improve the connectivity between the Labs and the universities. This problem may require some sort of New Equipment Infrastructure initiative because the project is too sizeable for the NFS to take care of. Leith will communicate any feedback from the DOE and NSF on these issues to SLUO.

Leith brought up the topic of the immigration bill currently in Congress. He said SLAC management is working on softening the restrictions introduced by the bill. He also is seeking input from the universities and SLUO. Of particular concern is the proposed 36-month limit on J-1 visas which would have an adverse impact on BaBar and other future international projects. SLUO university representatives will investigate the impact of the bill.

Nauenberg expressed concern about the recent wave of layoffs and the implications to users, as reflected by the recent re-engineering of the SLAC travel office. Leith confirmed that there would most likely be another wave of layoffs next year. However, changes in the travel office should not affect the level of service to the users. Nauenberg also emphasized the usefulness of other services like the SLAC housing office.

Nauenberg finally expressed the Executive Committee’s great satisfaction about the hiring of Ree Dufresne, the new full-time SLUO Administrative Associate.
Graduate Student Education

Nauenberg brought up the issue of education of the many graduate students residing at SLAC, many of whom do not have the opportunity to take Particle Physics classes at their home institutions. Nauenberg will talk to Burt Richter and the SLAC Theory Department to find out whether such classes could be held at SLAC.

Issues Pertaining to Users

Dick Fuendeling (Business Services Division) joined the meeting to talk about recent changes in the services provided at SLAC. The travel office has been re-engineered (starting March 1, 1996) but will not be discontinued. However, the booking of flights, hotels and car rentals will be handled by an outside travel agency (Sides Travel). The travel office will continue to handle travel approvals and advances. These changes should be invisible to the users and should not affect the quality of the service. Fuendeling said that the housing office will not be affected by the layoffs.

A duty-free procedure exists for international shipping through San Francisco (by air) and Oakland (by sea). Business Services Division will coordinate entry into the U.S. but requires advance notice from the interested party.

Fry brought up the issue of car rental insurance on business trips to SLAC and asked whether it would be possible for SLAC to provide insurance. This would have significant cost-saving benefits to the users, especially those travelling from overseas. An enquiry with the travel office following the meeting found that Stanford University will insure people on SLAC business within 50 miles of SLAC.

Those interested in the specific changes in the above procedures should contact the SLUO desk.

SLUO WWW Page

SLUO information is now available on the World Wide Web through the SLAC detailed home page (look for the section entitled SLAC Divisions, Groups, & Programs).

The SLUO page has been created by Ree Dufresne and will continue to expand to provide more information to the users. Minutes of present and past meetings of the Executive Committee will be available through the web.
SLUO Desk Refreshments

The Executive Committee would like to remind the users that the coffee and snacks provided at the SLUO desk are no longer subsidized by the Lab. Therefore, it is necessary for people to make a donation whenever possible to allow the SLUO desk to continue providing this service.

Next SLUO Executive Meeting

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held on Friday April 12.

Minutes submitted by,

Stéphane Willocq
Secretary/Treasurer
Users Executive Committee